



April 29, 2026

**OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVES  
MANAGERS, HUMAN RESOURCES  
MANAGERS, LABOR RELATIONS**

SUBJECT: Emergency Placement

In recent discussions with the management associations, the issue of placing non-bargaining employees in an off-duty status without pay on an emergency basis has been discussed. The language relevant to this issue is outlined in Section 651.4 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM). That section provides:

An employee may be placed in an off-duty nonpay status immediately, but remains on the rolls when he or she:

- (a) Exhibits characteristics or impairment due to alcohol, drugs or other intoxicant;
- (b) Fails to observe safety rules;
- (c) Fails to obey a direct order;
- (d) Provides reason to be deemed potentially injurious to self or others; or
- (e) Disrupts day-to-day postal operations in any other way.

Placement in an off-duty nonpay status is confirmed in writing, stating the reasons and advising the employee that the action is appealable. The employee should be returned to duty after the cause for nonpay status ceases unless individual circumstances warrant otherwise. Use of these emergency procedures does not preclude disciplinary action based on the same conduct.

As you know, emergency placement in an off-duty status without pay is to be used in those instances where it is necessary to remove the employee from the premises immediately. This provision should not be utilized when it is more appropriate to use only other corrective measures such as a letter of warning (ELM 651.5), a letter of warning in lieu of a time-off suspension (ELM 651.6), or adverse action (ELM 651.7).

Absent unusual circumstances, emergency placement in an off-duty status without pay is a temporary measure that allows management time to investigate and consider whether other disciplinary measures are warranted. Where it is necessary to ensure that an employee remains off duty for a period in excess of a few days, the employee may be placed on administrative leave with pay.

This is the appropriate measure to take in those situations in which emergency placement is no longer appropriate and allegations of misconduct are being investigated that may warrant adverse action (ELM 519.24). However, managers have the responsibility to avoid excessive periods of administrative leave where possible. This includes promptly investigating and responding to misconduct and periodically reviewing the retention of an employee on administrative leave to ensure that continuation in that status is necessary. When additional options become available, such as having sufficient information to return the employee to work or take adverse action, that action should be initiated at the earliest possible date so that the Postal Service does not incur unnecessary expense by having the employee on administrative leave for an extended period of time.

Managers of employees placed on emergency placement or administrative leave as described above must promptly suspend the employee's access in eAccess/ARIS until the employee is restored to duty status.

If you have any questions regarding emergency placements, please contact Labor Relations for field employees and National Human Resources for Headquarters and Headquarters-related employees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Elston", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael J. Elston